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INFO RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
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RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 3368
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RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC
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UNCLAS KABUL 005665

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DEPT FOR SCA/FO, SCA/A, S/CR, S/CT
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN
OSD FOR KIMMITT
CENTCOM FOR CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-76, AND POLAD
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL PGOV SNAR AF
SUBJECT: PRT/QAL-E NOW: NGOS VIEWS ON SECURITY AND
GOVERNANCE

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Security in Badghis provincial capital of Qal-e Now has always been considered good and to-date there have been no insurgency related incidents there. While attacks in Badghis are currently rare, the security situation is tenuous in many districts. NGOs have limited or changed their programs to protect their employees and are concerned that this has limited their ability to reach the most at-risk (predominantly Pashtun) segments of the province. Some NGOs allege security forces and government officials are often more a part of the problem than the solution. The provincial capital is generally peaceful now, but poverty and lack of effective governance make the districts ripe recruiting grounds for insurgent groups and could lead to further insecurity. The aid community looks to the PRT to improve the ANP's capability. END SUMMARY.

Provincial Capital Security "Manageable"

¶2. (SBU) Security in the sleepy provincial capital of Qal-e Now has always been considered good. Currently, both civilian and military members of the PRT frequently walk to meetings with as little as a two-man armed escort. The military contingent continually evaluates the current threat level and it has not increased its security protocols for operations in the capital. On a recent visit to the province, UNAMA's regional security officer stated that the threat level in the capital was "manageable" and recommended going forward with the planned UNAMA office opening in Qal-e Now by the end of the year.

ANP Struggling to Provide Security in Districts

¶3. (SBU) While attacks in the capital city are currently rare, night letters are becoming more common in many districts. Although UNAMA will soon open an office in Qal-e Now, there are no plans to base employees outside of the city. Several aid workers opined that there are few attacks in the districts because there are virtually no foreign workers living outside the capital. The NGO and development

workers interviewed by PRToff agreed that security had deteriorated in the districts. The ANP's and the National Directorate of Security's (NDS) limited capacity outside of Qal-e Now, especially in the districts of Murghab, Gormach and Jarwan, contributes to the uneven security situation.

Security Concerns Restrict NGOs

14. (SBU) NGOs have reduced or changed their programs to protect their employees and are concerned this has limited their ability to reach the most at-risk (predominantly Pashtun) segments of the province. World Vision will continue to evaluate and fund projects in the districts, but will rely on provincial ministries to staff and administer programs outside of the capital. It has reportedly agreed to remain in Qal-e Now in part due to a plan to create a radio-based warden system in Qal-e Now. Each NGO would purchase or receive a radio with a frequency monitored 24-hours-a-day by the PRT. The NGO community welcomed this plan and believes it will provide much needed additional security in the capital area.

15. (SBU) BRAC, an NGO from Bangladesh, runs the province's medical network and has the widest exposure throughout the province. The NGO administers 24 hospitals and clinics, many of them inherited from other NGOs when they left the province due to security reasons. On November 4, BRAC's director told PRToff he had recalled all of his doctors in Gormach and Murghab districts, and from one clinic in Jarwan district. A few locally-trained nurses are responsible for medical care in a large part of the province. (Note: All of BRAC's doctors and nurse are Afghans, but the doctors are from other provinces and are, therefore, viewed as outsiders by locals.

End Note.). The BRAC director said if things worsen he would be forced to close more clinics, effectively eliminating the province's health care system.

NGOs Deride Governmental Corruption

16. (SBU) Some NGOs allege that security forces and government officials are often more a part of the problem than the solution. Their reports assert that the recent attack against the World Vision office in Murghab was ordered by Murghab District Governor Aga Khan and the furniture taken from World Vision's office was divided among his supporters. Recently, two of the six district governors were removed on corruption-related charges, but the aid community views such actions with skepticism. For example, several aid workers suggested that Aga Khan's decision to order the looting of a World Vision office was not what got him into trouble; rather, it was not giving the furniture he looted to the "right people" that caused local officials to get involved.

17. (SBU) The local government regularly complains that the Spanish Agency for International Development (AECI) often awards contracts to companies from other provinces, pointing out that keeping the contracts local would provide jobs to locals. AECI Director Pablo Yuste maintains that local officials push to keep the jobs local because they are less able to extort money from companies not based in the province. Recently, the provincial Head of Economy Abdul Baez Surjabi approached Yuste regarding AECI's vehicle rental arrangements. Surjabi came to the PRT alone and requested to speak with the AECI director without the aid of a nearby translator "to allow him to practice his English." He suggested that if AECI canceled its current vehicle contract and contracted with him, he could provide vehicles for less and would return the surplus cash directly to AECI.

COMMENT

18. (SBU) Badghis is a relatively calm province, but it is also one of the nation's poorest. The lack of security limits NGOs from reaching the poorest (often Pashtun)

segments of the province. This creates a vicious cycle: increased dissatisfaction with the government in the district creates more unrest and worsens the security situation, which increases dissatisfaction. In the past, increased insecurity was attributed to rising ethnic tensions and general criminality, but the increase in the appearance of night letters purportedly posted by Taliban and the recent murder of several district employees seems to indicate an up-tick in anti-government and insurgency activity in the province. The aid community is looking to the PRT to improve the ANP's capacity. (Note: The recent arrival of U.S. police training units was warmly welcomed and is viewed as a key element in improving provincial security. END COMMENT.

NEUMANN